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SOME IMĀMĪ-SHĪ'Ī VIEWS ON TAQIYYA

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In this article an attempt is made to re-examine the long-held notion that *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) is an essential element and a distinguishing mark of Imāmī Shī'ism. It is contended that while Imāmī Shī'is often resorted to *taqiyya* to escape harassment and persecution, even raising the principle of *taqiyya* to the level of an article of faith, there were many who hedged their acceptance of it with reservations, while others abandoned the practice of *taqiyya* altogether and chose instead to reveal and fight for their true beliefs. The different Imāmī Shī'ī attitudes to *taqiyya* were shaped as much by political and historical circumstances as by the growth of an increasingly intricate body of Shī'ī doctrine.

I. THE CONCEALMENT OF ONE'S TRUE BELIEFS in times of adversity is an ancient phenomenon recurring in divers religions. In Islam this practice, commonly known as *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation), is most often associated with Imāmī, or Twelver, Shī'ism. Indeed, the generally held view, both among non-Imāmī Muslims and among modern scholars,¹ is that belief in *taqiyya* is a central tenet of Imāmī doctrine and that *taqiyya* was regularly and continuously practised and encouraged by the Imāms throughout the ages. In the following lines an attempt will be made to show that the picture is more complex than might at first appear, and that Imāmī views on this subject underwent significant modifications and changes.

II. Perhaps it might be best to start by mentioning some non-Imāmī arguments regarding the Imāmī practice of *taqiyya*. One of the most common accusations levelled against the Imāmiyya by their adversaries is that their professed belief in *taqiyya* is merely a convenient stratagem to explain away historical facts which do not tally with their doctrine. In particular, say their critics, the Imāms cannot stomach certain basic truths pertaining to the role of the first three caliphs. Thus, when confronted with irrefutable proof that Abū Bakr's caliphate was legitimised by Muḥam-

mad, they resort to the audacious argument that the Prophet spoke out of *taqiyya*.² When faced with the fact that 'Alī recognised the rule of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, they ascribe his behaviour to *taqiyya*; yet 'Alī, who was known for his personal courage and his large following, would certainly have fought had he felt deprived of his rights. By implying that 'Alī behaved in a cowardly fashion the Shī'is betray that in contradiction to their professed love for 'Alī, they in fact hate him as they hate all good Muslims.³ An extreme example of alleged Shī'ī abuse of *taqiyya* is provided by the anti-Shī'ī Ottoman scholar Mu'īn al-Dīn Mīrẓā Makhdūm (d. 995/1587) in his polemical treatise *Al-nawāqid li-bunyān al-rawāfiq*.⁴ In his view, the Shī'is cannot admit that 'Umar and 'Alī were on friendly terms which were formalised by 'Alī's daughter Umm Kulthūm being given to 'Umar in marriage. They claim therefore that 'Alī gave his daughter out of *taqiyya*, that the marriage was not legally binding, and that there-

² Aḥmad b. Zaynī Daḥlān, *Risāla fī kayfiyyat al-munāzara ma'a 'l-shī'a wa'l-radd 'alayhim* (Cairo, 1323), pp. 45-46.

³ Abu 'l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Malaṭī, *K. al-tanbīh wa'l-radd 'alā ahl al-ahwā' wa'l-bida'*, ed. S. Dederling (Istanbul, 1936), pp. 24-25; Daḥlān, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁴ Br. Mus. MS no. Or. 7991, ff74a-75a. On this work (known also as *Al-nawāqid fī 'l-radd 'alā 'l-rawāfiq*) see the dissertation of E. Eberhard, *Osmanische Polemik gegen die Safawiden im 16. Jahrhundert nach arabischen Handschriften*, Freiburg 1970 (where the Br. Mus. MS is not mentioned among the extant MSS of the work).

¹ For the latter see especially I. Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *taqiyya* im Islam," *ZDMG* 60 (1906), pp. 213-226 [= *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. J. Desomogyi, (Hildesheim 1967-70), V, pp. 59-72]; R. Strothmann, article "Taḳīya," in *EI*¹, IV, pp. 628-629.



fore Umm Kulthūm committed fornication with the full knowledge of her father and her brothers Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. How, asks Mirzā Makhdūm, can the Shī'is believe that such a disgraceful act could have been condoned by members of the *ahl al-bayt*, who are purified of all pollution?⁵

These and similar claims must be juxtaposed with what the Imāmis themselves said about the subject. The first clear pronouncements on *taqiyya* in Imāmī literature may be traced back to the generation of Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732 or 117/735) and his son Ja'far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), the fifth and sixth Imams respectively. This is the period in which the beginnings of an independent sect within Shī'ism—later to be known as the Imāmiyya—become manifest. It is also the period when Shī'is were mercilessly persecuted by the authorities, whether Umayyad or 'Abbasid. Al-Bāqir and al-Šādiq led a life of retirement and avoided as much as possible any interference in the stormy political events of their time. They must have come to believe that the best guarantee for the survival of Shī'ism lay not in the taking up of arms but in the preservation and propagation of the Shī'ī heritage, and that as long as the Shī'is were a persecuted minority, the first priority was to protect their lives. This could best be achieved by practicing precautionary dissimulation whenever the need arose. From an early period, the Imāmis based this belief on certain Quranic verses which they interpreted as referring to *taqiyya*. One often-quoted verse is, "Let not believers take unbelievers for their friends in preference to believers.

Whoever does that has no connection with Allāh, unless (you act) out of precaution (*tattaqū*), so as to guard yourselves from them" (*Qur'ān* 3/28(27)).⁶ Another verse which is often cited in justification of *taqiyya* is explained by both Sunnī and Shī'ī exegetes as referring to the Companion 'Ammār b. Yāsir, who was forced under torture to renounce his faith: "Whoever expresses disbelief in Allāh after having believed [will suffer greatly]—except him who is compelled, his heart being still at peace in belief" (*Qur'ān* 16/106(108)).⁷ The basic meaning of the verb *ittaqā* (from which *taqiyya* is derived) is "to fear (God)"; "to practise dissimulation" is only a secondary meaning. This ambiguity permits the Shī'is to interpret the verse: *inna akramakum 'inda 'llāhi atqākum* ("the most noble amongst you in the eyes of God is the most God-fearing amongst you") (*Qur'ān* 49/13) as referring to *taqiyya* (*atqākum* = *a'malakum bi'l-taqiyya*, i.e., "who practises *taqiyya* most").⁸ A saying attributed to Ja'far al-Šādiq deliberately evokes this Quranic verse: "He is most excellent in performance of his religious duties in the eyes of God who is best at observing *taqiyya*."⁹ Similar utterances ascribed to the Imams abound in Shī'ī literature, e.g., "He who has no *taqiyya* [i.e., who does not practise precautionary dissimulation] has no faith;"¹⁰ "A believer without *taqiyya* is like a body without a head."¹¹

⁵ On the basis of *Qur'ān* 33/33. Imāmī sources do not present a unified version of this event. 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Qazwīnī (on whom see below, p. 401) maintains that 'Alī gave his daughter in marriage of his own free will (see his *K. al-naqd*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥusaynī Urmawī, Tehran, 1952, pp. 278-279). A similar position is adopted by the pro-'Alid historian Aḥmad b. Ishāq al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897) in his *Ta'rikh* (ed. M. Th. Houtsma, Leiden, 1883, II, p. 171). Most Imāmis, however, contend that 'Alī was forced under threats of violence to agree to the marriage. See Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulīnī, *Furū' al-kāfi*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Tehran, 1375-7), V, p. 346; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzih al-anbiyā'* (Najaf, 1380), pp. 179-180; *id.*, *Talkhiṣ al-'uyūn wa'l-maḥāsīn*, Ind. Off. MS no. 471, f110a. Lammens (*Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet*, Rome, 1912, p. 129) believes that Umm Kulthūm (who is said to have been less than seven years old at the time) may have been forced to marry 'Umar after she had been violated by him.

⁶ Quoted in Ibn Bābawayhi, *A Shī'ite creed*, trans. A. A. Fyzee (London, 1942), p. 111. Among Shī'ī *Qur'ān* commentaries see, e.g., al-Faḥr al-b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut, 1954-7), III, pp. 55-56.

⁷ Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Persia, 1305-15) [= *Biḥār*], XVI, p. 224; Goldziher, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁸ Ibn Bābawayhi, *Al-hidāya*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khuwānsārī (Tehran, 1860), p. 24a; *id.*, *A Shī'ite creed*, p. 111; Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, *Amālī* (Najaf, 1384), II, p. 275, *cit. Biḥār*, XVI, p. 231.

⁹ *Inna a'malakum 'inda 'llāhi atqākum* (Muḥammad b. Murtaḍā Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, *Tafsīr al-šāfi*, Persia 1893, p. 491); *cf.* Goldziher, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221.

¹⁰ *Lā imān li-man lā taqiyya lahu* (Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī, *K. al-maḥāsīn*, ed. Muḥammad Šādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Najaf, 1964, p. 203, *cit. Biḥār*, XVI, p. 224; Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd al-'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr*, Ind. Off. MS no. 1076, f49a; al-Kulīnī, *Uṣūl al-kāfi*, II, p. 218). Similarly, *lā dīn li-man lā taqiyya lahu* (al-Barqī, *op. cit.*, p. 202; al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 217; *Biḥār*, *loc. cit.*).

¹¹ *Mathal mu'min lā taqiyya lahu ka-mathal jasad lā*



The central position thus allotted to *taqiyya* had a direct bearing on the Imāmi way of life, as witness the numerous claims in Imāmi literature that many professed Sunnis had in fact been Shī'is practising *taqiyya*. The disappearance of the twelfth Imam (in 260/874) is explained as an act of *taqiyya* designed to save him from harm until his return as Mahdī.¹² There even exists a special legal term, *dār al-taqiyya*, denoting the areas where *taqiyya* is obligatory.¹³ The notion of *taqiyya* likewise had important implications for various facets of Shī'ī *ḥadīth*. In early Shī'ī circles, for instance, great stress was laid on the principle that genuine Shī'ī traditions should be concealed from strangers (*kitmān*, *taqiyya*) and be propagated (*idhā'a*) only among the faithful.¹⁴ The principle of *taqiyya* was not restricted to the hostile outside world, but was sometimes applied to relationships among the Shī'is themselves. The pro-'Alid Companion Salmān al-Fārisī, for example, was noted for the esoteric knowledge which he possessed. According to Shī'ī tradition he concealed this knowledge even from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, a close friend of Salmān and a loyal follower of 'Alī. The reason given for this behaviour is that if Salmān's knowledge had been communicated to Abū Dharr he would have been unable to grasp its true significance and would

have felt obliged to denounce Salmān or even to kill him as a heretic. When the fourth Imam 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn is quoted as saying that Abū Dharr would have killed Salmān if he had known what was in Salmān's heart, he is in fact making an appeal for the practice of *taqiyya*.¹⁵

The need to resort to *taqiyya* so as to permit Shī'is to follow non-Shī'ī practices sometimes led to two *ḥadīths* contradicting each other.¹⁶ In such a case, the believer is exhorted to follow that *ḥadīth* which contradicts the Sunni practice.¹⁷ In the Ṣafawid period, the problem of *taqiyya* in *ḥadīth* became a major issue in the conflict between the Uṣūliyyūn (or Mujtahidūn) and the Akhbāriyyūn. The former, who maintained that doctrine should be based on reason, not on adherence to individual traditions, argued in defense of the view that it was not always possible to distinguish traditions which expressed the true opinions of the Imams from those which sprang out of *taqiyya*. The Akhbāriyyūn on the other hand, who contended that every Shī'ī *ḥadīth* should be accepted as a source of law, argued that even when a particular tradition was based on *taqiyya*, God had allowed the Shī'a to follow its ruling, hence it was not essential to ascertain in each case whether or not

ra's lahu (al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-'Askarī, *Tafsir*, Lucknow, 1893, p. 163, whence Goldziher, *op. cit.*, p. 219; *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 229). Expressions used interchangeably with *taqiyya* include *kitmān* and, less frequently, *khab'* (for the latter see Ibn Bābawayhi, *Ma'āni 'l-akhbār*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1379, p. 162).

¹² Goldziher, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

¹³ *Al-taqiyya fi dār al-taqiyya wājiba* (Ibn Bābawayhi, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, Najaf, 1970, II, pp. 122-123, *cit. Biḥār*, XVI, p. 224; *id.*, *K. al-khiṣāl*, *cit. Biḥār*, XXI, p. 97). This term includes the *dār al-islām*, which comprises the area under Muslim, non-Imāmi control. It includes neither the *dār al-imān*, where the Imāmi faith prevails, nor the *dār al-kufr*, which comprises the area under the control of the infidels. See Ibn Bābawayhi, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, II, p. 124; cf. al-Shaykh al-Mufid *Awā'il al-maqālāt*, ed. Faḍl Allāh al-Zanjānī (Tabriz, 1371), pp. 70-71. The term *dār al-taqiyya* is also found in a description of one of the Kaysānī sub-sects. See Sa'd b. 'Abd Allāh, *K. al-maqālāt wa'l-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Jawād Mashkūr (Tehran, 1963), p. 22.

¹⁴ Al-Barqī, *op. cit.*, p. 205, and in general al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 221-226 (*bāb al-kitmān*).

¹⁵ Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummi, *Baṣṣa'ir al-darajāt* (Tehran 1285), p. 87b; al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, I, p. 401, *cit. Biḥār*, VI, p. 753; Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Kishshī, *K. al-rijāl*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Najaf, c. 1964), p. 22; 'Alī Khān b. Aḥmad Ibn Ma'sūm, *Al-darajāt al-rafi'a*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm (Najaf, 1382), p. 211; Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī, *Nafas al-raḥmān fi faḍā'il Salmān* (Tehran, 1285), pp. 17b, 28a; Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Muḥammad Ja'far Maḥjūb (Tehran, 1960-66), II, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ Cf. Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, *Al-nawādir fi jam' al-aḥādīth* (Tehran, 1960), p. 25 (quoting Ibn Bābawayhi). It is interesting to note that according to the famous Mu'tazilī Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. c. 221/836), most of the Companions of the Prophet refrained out of *taqiyya* from expressing their true views. See the discussion in J. van Ess, *Das Kitāb an-Nakṭ des Nazzām und seine Rezeption im Kitāb al-Futūḥ des Ḡāhiz* (Göttingen 1971), pp. 113-114.

¹⁷ Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, *op. cit.*, p. 35; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt al-'uqūl* (on the margin of al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, I, p. 66) (both quoting Ja'far al-Ṣādiq); G. Lecomte, "Aspects de la littérature du *ḥadīth* chez les Imāmites," in *Le Shī'isme Imāmīte*, Colloque de Strasbourg (Paris, 1970), pp. 100-101.



a given *ḥadīth* constituted a genuine expression of the Imam's thoughts.¹⁸

III. In the previous section it was shown that considerable importance was attached to the principle of *taqiyya* in Imāmī circles. However, other views on the subject were never far from the surface. The urge to profess openly one's religion and to fight for one's cause is not only a basic human characteristic, but is also intimately linked to the principle of *jihād*, which is common to all Islam. In Imāmī literature this "activist trend" may be discerned in interpretations of 'Alī's behaviour after Muḥammad's death. 'Alī is often described as the most valorous of all the Companions, and his exploits in the various battles and expeditions are widely extolled in Shī'ī literature.¹⁹ Yet throughout the events which culminated in Abū Bakr's election 'Alī remained passive and did not fight for what were supposedly his inviolable rights. The Imāmīs attempt to justify this passivity by pointing to the insufficient number of 'Alī's supporters. On his deathbed Muḥammad is said to have told 'Alī, "the community will betray you after my death and will break my compact with you [. . .]; if you find helpers, hasten to fight them [sc. your enemies]; if you do not find helpers, restrain your hand and do not spill your blood; the time will come when you meet me as one to whom injustice was done (*maẓlūman*)."²⁰ Muḥammad, basing himself on a Quranic verse (*Qur'ān* 8/65(66)), is similarly reported to have told 'Alī to fight his enemies if he could find twenty supporters.²¹ According to other reports, 'Alī would have been ready to fight had he been assured of the support of forty men.²² It is also related that 'Alī asked his followers to shave their heads as a gesture of obedience. When only

three or four Companions complied with this request, 'Alī exclaimed to the others, "you did not obey me by shaving your heads; how then will you obey me in fighting mountains of iron?"²³

In order to buttress their claim that lack of sufficient support was a legitimate justification for 'Alī to refrain from fighting, the Imāmīs point to the precedent set by the Prophet. Muḥammad refrained for thirteen years from declaring a holy war against the polytheists in Mecca, and maintained this state of inactivity for a further nineteen months after his emigration to Medina. Just as Muḥammad waited all that time to gain a sufficient number of loyal supporters, so it was permissible for 'Alī to wait for 25 years until he could feel confident of victory.²⁴ 'Alī is quoted as arguing that before Muḥammad, too, prophets had to refrain from fighting for their cause because of the superior strength of their enemies.²⁵ In the Imāmī view, 'Alī used every opportunity to demand his rights. He may therefore be said to have practised *taqiyya* only in the broad sense of refraining from action which would inevitably have led to unnecessary and useless bloodshed; but he never deliberately concealed his beliefs, and did not raise *taqiyya* to the level of a principle of faith.²⁶

²³ Ibn Bābawayhi, *'Ilal al-sharā'i'*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm (Najaf, 1963), p. 148; al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *K. al-ikhtisāṣ*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Tehran 1960), p. 6.

²⁴ Ibn Bābawayhi, *loc. cit.*, whence A. S. Tritton, "Popular Shī'ism," in *BSOAS* 13 (1949-51), p. 830; Ibn Bābawayhi, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, II, p. 80. Cf. also the statement of the Sunni theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) that the Shī'īs based their principle of *taqiyya* on the Prophet's behaviour when he hid in a cave to escape his Qurayshī enemies while on his way to Medina (*Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimin wa'l-muta'akḥkhirin*, Cairo, 1323, p. 181).

²⁵ See the (anonymous) *Munāẓarat malik [sic] Ruḥn al-Dawla ma'a 'l-Ṣadūq*, Br. Mus. MS no. Add. 16832, ff271a-271b.

²⁶ Members of the "extremist" Shī'ī Kāmiliyya sect apparently remained unimpressed by explanations given for 'Alī's inactivity. They are reported to have branded as unbelievers not only the Companions, for failing to help 'Alī, but also 'Alī himself, for letting himself be supplanted by the first three caliphs. But 'Alī and his followers are said to have returned to the fold of Islam after he became caliph and waged

¹⁸ A. Falaturi, "Die Zwölfer-Schia aus der Sicht eines Schiiten: Probleme ihrer Untersuchung," in *Festschrift Werner Caskel* (Leiden, 1968), p. 84.

¹⁹ See, e.g., the *K. al-irshād* of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (Najaf 1962), analysed by H. Laoust, "Le rôle de 'Alī dans la Sira Chi'ite," in *REI* 30 (1962), pp. 7-26.

²⁰ Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭālib al-Ṭabarsī, *Al-iḥtijāj* (Najaf, 1350), pp. 47-48.

²¹ See al-'Ayyāshī, *op. cit.*, f139b; cf. al-Ṭūsī, *K. al-ghayba*, ed. Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭīhrānī (Najaf, 1385), p. 203.

²² Ibn Ma'sūm, *op. cit.*, p. 38. This view is also reflected in the Ismā'īlī work *Ta'wīl al-zakāt* of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman; see Goldziher, *op. cit.*, p. 218, n. 4.



While 'Alī's behaviour may be construed at least partially as reflecting *taqiyya*, this is definitely not the case with those Imāmīs who openly fought their oppressors, often against overwhelming odds. Outstanding examples are provided by anti-Umayyad rebels such as Ḥujr b. 'Adī, 'Amr b. Ḥamiq al-Khuzā'ī, Mitham b. Yaḥyā al-Tammār, Rushayd al-Hajarī and others, all of whom are claimed by the Imāmīs as their own. They are praised by Imāmī writers for boldly defying the authorities and for dying as martyrs in the battle against evil.²⁷

Fighting for the Shī'ī cause, then, can be a laudable act even when there are virtually no chances of survival. A similar notion is that suffering for one's faith is more virtuous than public renunciation of it. A report about Salmān al-Fārisī may serve to illustrate this point. Salmān was allegedly severely flogged by the Jews in an attempt to force him to dissociate himself publicly from Muḥammad. When Salmān refused to yield, the Jews reminded him that Muḥammad had permitted him to practise *taqiyya*. To this Salmān answered, "God has given me dispensation to do so [sc. to practise *taqiyya*] but has not imposed it on me as a duty; he has rather permitted me to refuse you what you want and to endure your loathsome actions; [indeed], he has made this the more noble of the two courses of action."²⁸

Patient perseverance in the face of adversity (*ṣabr*) is depicted here as preferable to *taqiyya*. Precautionary dissimulation is permitted as a dispensation (*rukḥṣa*), not imposed as a duty. This idea is emphasised by the Shī'ī traditionist and exegete 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. 307/919), who was known for his fiercely anti-Sunni

views. In his commentary on *Qur'ān* 3/28(27) he declares, "*taqiyya* is a dispensation (*rukḥṣa*) to the believer, lest an unbeliever should see him [i.e., perceive that he is a Shī'ī]."²⁹

Taqiyya is sometimes to be abandoned not only where expressions of belief are concerned, as in the case of Salmān, but also in the performance of certain religious duties. A striking saying has it that *taqiyya* may not be practised as regards drinking *nabīdh*, the *mash 'ala 'l-khuffayn* (i.e., wiping the outer part of the shoes before the prayer) and (according to some versions) the *mut'at al-ḥajj* (i.e., performing the 'umra and the *hajj* during the same journey, while separating the two by a de-consecration).³⁰ (The Shī'īs forbid the first two practices and follow the third). This saying poses a problem for those Imāmī scholars who refuse to acknowledge that *taqiyya* must thus be abandoned. They explain away the difficulty by arguing that normally there is no danger in performing these duties in the Shī'ī manner, either because they are not radically different from the Sunni practice, or because there are Sunnis who themselves follow the same practices.³¹ But perhaps that saying may be given a different interpretation. In their literature, the Shī'īs deliberately stress the differences—usually very minor—which separate them from the Sunni *madhāhib*.³² In this way they wish to highlight the independence of their own school of law and to project themselves as the only Muslims who faithfully adhered to Muḥammad's original teachings. The *mash 'ala 'l-khuffayn* and the *mut'at al-ḥajj* were thus turned into *causes célebres*, and 'Umar was accused of a sinful innovation (*bid'a*) for

wars against his opponents. This doctrine seems to have interesting parallels with Khārījī claims that 'Alī and his followers became unbelievers by agreeing to the arbitration after Ṣiffin and abandoning the *jihād* against Mu'āwiya. On the Kāmilīyya see e.g., al-Nāshī' al-Akbar, *Masā'il al-imāma*, in J. van Ess, *Frühe Mu'tazilitische Häresiographie* (Beirut, 1971), p. 45 (where they are referred to as al-Kumayliyya), and the references given there; Tritton, *Muslim theology* (London, 1947), p. 26.

²⁷ Biographies of these men from a Shī'ī point of view may be found in the Shī'ī *rijāl*-literature. See in particular al-Kishshī, *op. cit.*, index.

²⁸ Al-'Askarī, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

²⁹ 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Ṭayyib al-Mūsawī al-Jazā'irī (Najaf, 1386-7), I, p. 100.

³⁰ Al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 217, *cit. Biḥār*, XVI, p. 232 ('*an al-Ṣādiq*). Further versions in *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 224 ('*an 'Alī*). See also al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Da'ā'im al-islām*, ed. A. A. A. Fyzee, II, (Cairo 1960), p. 130.

³¹ *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 232, where further arguments are also given. This is essentially correct: all Sunnis (except the Ḥanafīs) forbid the drinking of *nabīdh*; and the *mut'at al-ḥajj* is recognised by the Sunni *madhāhib* as well (see e.g., al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Cairo, 1349, VIII, pp. 134-135). Only the wiping (or washing) of the feet (instead of the shoes) (*al-mash 'ala 'l-rijlayn*) became a particularly Shī'ī custom.

³² Cf. Y. Linant de Bellefonds, "Le droit imāmīte," in *Le Shī'isme Imāmīte*, pp. 183-199.



having permitted the former and forbidden the latter.³³ The prohibition of *nabidh*, though not restricted to Shī'ism, may likewise have served to draw a clear distinction between the Shī'is and the Ḥanafis, who were often their antagonists. With these facts in mind, a parallel may be drawn between the saying under discussion and the story about Salmān and the Jews: just as Salmān would not resort to *taqiyya* on a matter of principle, so the believers should not conceal those practices which have become the distinguishing marks of true faith.

IV. Attempts at reconciling the conflicting views on *taqiyya* which existed within the Imāmī camp began to be made by leading Imāmī scholars of the Buwayhid period. One of the earliest of these scholars, Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Bābawayhi (d. 381/991), maintains that under the rule of oppressors, *taqiyya* is a religious duty (*farīḍa wājiba*), and he who forsakes it is in the same position as he who forsakes prayer; yet if the practice of *taqiyya* were to result in danger to human life, it should be abandoned.³⁴ The same principle is upheld three centuries later by the Imāmī theologian and doctor Najm al-Dīn Ja'far b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥillī (d. 676/1277) when he states that if an evil ruler forces a Shī'ī to perform the *ḥadd* on an innocent person, the Shī'ī is allowed to obey out of *taqiyya*, but not if ordered to kill that person.³⁵

Ibn Bābawayhi's pronouncements are elaborated upon by al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), the most authoritative Imāmī scholar of the Buwayhid period. Al-Mufid argues that Ibn Bābawayhi himself openly expressed his true beliefs, and was right in so doing. This is because Ibn Bābawayhi, who lived in predominantly Shī'ī surroundings, did not run any serious risks by his actions. As a rule, al-Mufid maintains, *taqiyya* should be practised only if it is known by a necessary knowl-

edge (*bi'l-darūra*) or if it is probable (*qawīya fi 'l-ẓann*) that its abandonment would cause harm to the true religion or to the believers in this world. The Imams themselves are known to have ordered one group of followers to practise *taqiyya*, while another group, whose members were not in danger, was ordered to argue with their opponents and call upon them to join the Shī'a.³⁶

In his *Awā'il al-maqālāt*, al-Mufid couches his views on the subject in more general terms: "I say that *taqiyya* is permissible in religion when there is fear for one's life. It may [also] be sometimes permitted when there is danger to one's property or when the well-being [of the community] may be promoted. I say that sometimes it is obligatory and its observance becomes a religious duty, and sometimes it is permissible but not obligatory; at times it is best to practise it and at other times it is better to abandon it; though even when it is best abandoned, he who practises it is excused and pardoned."³⁷ In other words, the believer must often use his own judgment. This idea is succinctly expressed in an utterance ascribed to al-Bāqir, "*taqiyya* is [to be practised] in case of need. Each person knows best when such a case arises."³⁸

The last great Imāmī scholar of the Buwayhid period, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), juxtaposes two views on *taqiyya*. He quotes the story of the two Muslim prisoners of Musaylima, one of whom agreed, under pressure, to acknowledge the anti-prophet, while the other refused to do so and was therefore put to death by Musaylima. When the Prophet heard about it, he is reported to have said, "the dead man has departed in his righteousness and certainty of belief and has attained his glory, peace be with him! But God has given the other a dispensation, no punishment shall fall upon him."³⁹ Al-Ṭūsī remarks, "according to this [tradition], *taqiyya* is [only] a dispensation, while pro-

³³ See, e.g., *Biḥār*, VIII, pp. 286-291, 302-303.

³⁴ Ibn Bābawayhi, *Al-hidāya* (Tehran, 1860), p. 24a, *cit.* *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 231. Cf. al-Barqī, *op. cit.*, p. 205, *cit.* *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 225 ('*an al-Bāqir*): *innamā ju'ilat al-taḳīyya li-yuḥḡana biha 'l-dimā' fa-idhā balagha 'l-dam ja-lā taḳīyya*. Cf. also al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 220 and the discussion in *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 233.

³⁵ Najm al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Al-mukhtaṣar al-nāfi' fi fiqh al-imāmiyya* (Tehran 1387), p. 139. See also Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, *Al-nihāya* (Beirut, 1970), pp. 301, 357; A. Querry, *Droit musulman* (Paris 1871-2), I, p. 356.

³⁶ Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Sharḥ 'uqā'id al-Ṣadūq*, ed. 'Abbāsquī Ṣ. Wajdī (Tabriz, 1371), pp. 66-67.

³⁷ *Id.*, *Awā'il al-maqālāt*, pp. 96-97, whence al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān*, III, p. 56, *Biḥār*, VIII, p. 144, Maḥmūd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma'āni* (Cairo, 1345), III, p. 108.

³⁸ Al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 219, *cit.* *Biḥār*, XVI, p. 234.

³⁹ Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-tibyān fi tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Shawqī al-Amin and Aḥmad Ḥabīb Qaṣīr al-'Āmilī (Najaf, 1376-83), II, p. 435, *cit.* al-Ṭabarsī, *op. cit.*, III, p. 56. See also *Biḥār*, VIII, p. 143.



nouncing the truth is a virtue; [but] the outward [meaning] of our traditions shows that [taqiyya] is obligatory and its opposite is an error."⁴⁰

Shī'ī scholars in later generations generally followed the guidelines laid down by their predecessors, though some individual variations may be discerned. A typical example of the views of these later scholars is provided by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Makkī al-Āmilī, known as al-Shahīd al-Awwal (put to death in 786/1384). In his work *Al-qawā'id wa'l-jawā'id*⁴¹ he declares that in general it is a sin not to practise *taqiyya*. But when the believer is faced with the prospect of having to pronounce words of unbelief or to dissociate himself from the *ahl al-bayt*, it is permissible (*mubāḥ*), or even preferable (*mustaḥabb*) for him to abandon *taqiyya* and endure hardship instead. Such a course should be followed especially by persons in a position of authority.⁴² The basis for this view may be found in a pronouncement allegedly made by 'Alī from the *minbar* in Kūfa. He is said to have told his followers that under coercion they were permitted to vilify him (*sabb*), but not to dissociate themselves from him (*barā'a*).⁴³

⁴⁰ Al-Ṭūsī, *loc. cit.*

⁴¹ On which cf. Āghā Buzurg al-Tīhrānī, *Al-dhari'a ilā taṣānif al-shi'a* (Najaf, 1936-8, Tehran 1941ff), XVII, p. 193.

⁴² Quoted in *Biḥār*, VIII, p. 144.

⁴³ Al-Kulīnī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 219, *cit. Biḥār*, XVI, p. 231. A different version (*loc. cit.*) has it that 'Alī refrained from telling them whether or not they could dissociate themselves from him. According to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (*Biḥār* XVI, pp. 224, 228, 234), *barā'a* is permitted when the believer is threatened with death. In an often-quoted tradition, vilification of a believer is condemned by Muḥammad as a grave sin (*sibāb al-mu'min* (or *al-muslim*) *fuṣūq*) (Wensinck, *Concordance*, II, p. 388, s.v. *sbb*; Ibn Bābawayhi, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faḥḥ*, ed. Ḥasan al-Mūsawī al-Khursān, III, Najaf, 1378, p. 373; cf. the discussion in Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Faḥrī, Cairo, 1952, I, pp. 245, 311; Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-fiṣal*, Cairo 1317-21, III, p. 237). According to a Shī'ī sect which flourished in the second half of the 3rd/9th century, *taqiyya* may not be cited as justification for the commission of grave sins (*wa-izhār al-fisq lā yajūzu taqiyyatan*) (al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *K. firaq al-shi'a*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul 1931, p. 84). Hence members of that sect presumably prohibited 'Alī's vilification under any circumstances.

Among contemporary Imānī scholars, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (1877-1954) complains that the Sunnis misinterpret Shī'ī views on *taqiyya*. He argues that *taqiyya* is not specific to Shī'ism, but is a form of behaviour which is dictated by reason. Every person has an innate need to defend himself. He may not hesitate to die for a lofty cause, but jeopardising one's life for any other reason is sheer stupidity and foolhardiness, sanctioned neither by religion nor by law. The author distinguishes three rules (*aḥkām*) as regards *taqiyya*: (a) It is obligatory if its abandonment would cause useless death; (b) When a person might derive an inner strength from publicly professing his true beliefs, he is at liberty to follow his impulse and abandon *taqiyya*, though he may still practise it; (c) *Taqiyya* is forbidden if its practice would lead to the spreading of falsehood and injustice.⁴⁴ The author, then, goes a step further than al-Mufid in that he specifically mentions cases where *taqiyya* is expressly forbidden. He mentions Ḥujr b. 'Adī and his fellow rebels, as well as al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī and his entourage, as examples of Shī'īs who refused to conceal their beliefs and who preferred to die as martyrs. Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' ends his argument (and his book) with an appeal to all Muslims, "do not force your brethren to practise *taqiyya* and then condemn them for it."⁴⁵

Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' obviously wrote with a Sunnī audience in mind. This in turn raises a general question: how can it be ascertained that a particular statement on *taqiyya* (or on any other sensitive subject) is not itself an expression of *taqiyya*? The answer often depends on the immediate environment in which the author lived, the political situation at his time, and the audience to which his work was addressed. Judging by these criteria, it would appear that statements such as those of al-Mufid, made from a position of considerable authority at the apogee of a pro-Shī'ī régime, are to be taken as a genuine reflection of their author's views. The same criteria, applied to a Shī'ī author such as 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Qazwīnī (d. c. 586/1190), would produce very different conclusions. Al-Qazwīnī sets out to defend Shī'ism against attacks by a Sunnī adversary and puts forward some strikingly moderate

⁴⁴ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', *Aṣl al-shi'a wa-uṣūlūhā* (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 192-193.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 195.



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views in the process; yet he stresses that his exposition was written “without precautionary dissimulation.”⁴⁶ But precisely such protestations of sincerity may have been dictated by the need to conceal his true thoughts—particularly since he lived during the Sunni Saljuq rule. Indeed, a later Imāmī author who rebukes al-Qazwīnī for obsequious expressions “from which the mind shrinks with aversion,” suggests that such expressions may have been used as a result of the need

to practise *taqiyya*.⁴⁷ Such doubts persist also regarding similar statements by contemporary Shī‘ī writers living under a Sunni régime.

But despite this note of caution, there is sufficient unambiguous evidence to show that the practice of *taqiyya* in Imāmī Shī‘ism, though widespread and well-known, by no means excluded other, often contrasting, forms of behaviour.

⁴⁶ Al-Qazwīnī, *K. al-naqd*, p. 307.

⁴⁷ I‘jāz Ḥusayn al-Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujub wa’l-asṭār*, ed. M. Hidāyat Ḥusayn (Calcutta 1914-35), p. 586. See also W. Madelung, “Imāmism and Mu‘tazilite theology,” in *Le Shi‘isme Imāmīte*, p. 21.

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